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ABSTRACT

The aim of the paper is to ascertain the size and cultural vitality of the Sephardic component of the 50 Sephardic congregations and communities in the United States. Particular attention is focused on the extent to which Judeo-Spanish, the language of the Sephardim, continues to play a role within the group. The history of Sephardic expulsion and resettlement is traced. The maintenance and shift of Judeo-Spanish as reflected in four domains is explored. These domains are the periodical press, radio and TV broadcasting, religious services, and ethnic community schools. Data were collected from Sephardic synagogues, community organizations, and educational institutions throughout the country. Although language shift has reached an advanced stage in Sephardic communities throughout the United States, there are signs of a revived interest in the Sephardic heritage and culture. Despite this interest, no evidence of any well-conceived and well-organized community-wide programs of language maintenance was found. (JK)

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Arlene Malinowski
LSA Annual Meeting
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Judeo-Spanish Language Maintenance Efforts in the United States*

I. Background

The Jews who were expelled from Spain by an edict of the Catholic monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella in 1492 sought refuge in communities throughout the world. These exiles and their descendants are known as the Sephardim;[1] their history presents a truly unique case of language and culture maintenance which spans almost half a millennium. A large number of the exiles, received graciously by Sultan Bayazid II, settled in the Ottoman Empire where, under tolerant Turkish rule, they preserved the language and customs of their homeland. Urban dwellers for the most part, the Sephardim engaged in business, manufacture, and trade, and thriving centers of Sephardic life sprung up in Constantinople (Istanbul), Smyrna (Izmir), Salonica, and Rhodes.[2]

The multi-ethnic, multi-cultural Ottoman Empire readily accepted, even encouraged the autonomy of linguistic minorities. As one such minority, the Spanish-speaking Jews lived in their own separate neighborhoods, established and staffed their own schools, and, by and large unmolested, observed and enforced their own precepts and ordinances. There was consequently little necessity for them to learn Turkish, and the majority did not master it. Rather, inasmuch as Judeo-Spanish was associated with tradition and community life, with ritual and with religion, that language came to be perceived as an essential determinant of group unity and group identity.[3]

The 19th century witnessed the first stirrings of nationalist sentiment in Turkey. In an attempt to promote greater allegiance to the Ottoman State,

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the Tanzimat Reforms of 1839 conferred upon all Turkish subjects equal rights as citizens. Even at this time the advantages of a monolingual policy were recognized; throughout the nineteenth century, however, the efforts of the government to induce minorities to abandon their traditional languages met with little or no success. Indeed it was not until the establishment of the Turkish Republic under Kemal Atatürk that a coherent and effective program of language reform was elaborated. By then--that is, in 1923--tens of thousands of Sephardim had already emigrated from Turkey and the Balkans to the United States.

The relative tranquility of nineteenth century life in Ottoman lands was severely disrupted by the Crimean War, the Balkan Wars, and World War I. As a result of the subsequent division of the Empire into the independent Balkan nation states, new and more forceful demands and pressures were placed on ethnic minorities such as the Sephardim. The new national governments were much more concerned with and vigorous in enforcing educational and linguistic uniformity than the Ottoman rulers had been (Kloss 1967:45). Ideological differences, the rise of anti-Semitism, and the economic crisis that affected all of Europe were important factors leading to the decision of many Sephardic Jews to leave for the United States in the early years of the 20th century. It is estimated that between the time of the Revolution of the Young Turks in 1908 and the establishment of American quota restrictions in 1924-25, 50,000 to 60,000 Sephardim entered the U.S. (Campeas 1971:1173).[4]

The Turkish and Balkan Sephardim who arrived in the United States at the turn of the century were not the first Sephardic Jews to settle in America. In fact, the first Jewish community in America was founded in New Amsterdam by a small group of Portuguese Jews who had sailed from Brazil in 1654.[5]

Congregation Shearith Israel (The Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue), for 175 years, between 1654 and 1825, was the only Jewish congregation in the city (Angel 1974:83). Portuguese was the language used in congregational minutes until 1736, and in financial reports until 1745. After 1735, as a consequence, in part, of the arrival of other Jewish immigrants who spoke neither Spanish nor Portuguese--i.e., central and eastern European Ashkenazim--English came to be more widely used in community affairs. Spanish was discontinued as a subject in the curriculum of the congregational school in 1766 (Postal and Koppman 1964:19).

The majority of the Sephardic Jews who landed at Ellis Island during the first two decades of this century were from such centers as Istanbul, Izmir, Salonica, Monastir, and Rhodes. Some were bi- or trilingual, speaking in addition to their native Judeo-Spanish, French,[6] Turkish, and/or Greek. From the earliest days of immigration, attempts were made to persuade or encourage the newcomers to travel to and establish themselves in cities other than New York. In 1907 the Industrial Removal Office, a Jewish organization that was part of the Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society, relocated Sephardic immigrants in such cities as Seattle, Gary, Cincinnati, Toledo, Columbus, and Cleveland. Angel (1974:90) notes that in spite of these efforts, most of the Sephardim remained in New York. There were, nonetheless, in 1914 sizable congregations in Seattle, San Francisco, Atlanta, Rochester, New York, and Portland, Oregon; and smaller communities in Chicago, Los Angeles, Indianapolis, and Montgomery, Alabama.

A similar pattern of settlement, it appears, was followed by all the Sephardic immigrants who arrived in various American cities during the first decades of the 20th century. Groups lived in tightly-knit neighborhoods, established their own local synagogues, social clubs, and mutual aid societies,

and clung tenaciously to their traditions (Bernardete 1953:13, 141-9; Angel 1974:91-2; Yerushalmi 1976:1-8; Stern 1977:67-79; Sanua 1977:282-3; Nemer 1981:13-6). From the beginning distinctions based on place of origin were maintained. In Los Angeles, for example, and in Seattle, one synagogue was founded by and for the Sephardim from Istanbul and Izmir, another by and for Sephardim from Rhodes. In New York City one social organization existed for Jews from Monastir, another whose members hailed from Salonica, and so on. Evidently then, there did exist among the newly-arrived Sephardim sentiments of regional loyalty or identification not unlike those expressed by other immigrant groups arriving at that time on American shores. Significantly, however, the Sephardim as a whole differed from most other linguistic minorities in that it was, in the final analysis, not nationality that defined the group, but religion. This association of language and religion--discussed by van der Plank (1978:445-48) as one type of institutionalization--had, as mentioned above, contributed much to the ability of the Sephardim to resist for centuries assimilation by a host culture. Given the extraordinary historical experience of the Sephardim, their survival, against expectation, as a distinct community whose religious and cultural heritage was intimately allied with a traditional language, it is all the more interesting that in America they have, by and large, been hardly less vulnerable than other immigrant groups to the process of acculturation and assimilation. There seems to be little doubt that in order for this rather dramatic change to occur, a reinterpretation of religious identity had to be effected; specifically, a separation had to be made between religious belief and language practice. And it is fair to assume that the position in America of the Sephardim as a linguistic and ethnic minority within a larger religious minority--i.e., American Jewry--

has been of considerable importance in bringing about this redefinition.

As years passed, many families who had successfully established themselves in business and prospered in their trades, and who had, in the process, begun gradually to adjust to the rhythms of American life, and to accept and adopt its values and expectations, left the old neighborhoods and moved to other areas of the expanding cities and to the suburbs. One result of this shift in population, quite relevant to the present study, and which will be discussed further in the final section of this paper, was the formation, notably in larger cities such as New York and Los Angeles, of heterogeneous congregations. Synagogues, including several originally founded by Spanish-speaking Jews, quite often served communities composed of Oriental (Arabic-speaking) and Ashkenazic Jews as well as Sephardim. In smaller communities, on the other hand, in Seattle, Atlanta, Cincinnati, and Indianapolis, the congregations remained relatively homogeneous.

At the present time there are, according to the American Sephardi Federation, fifty Sephardic congregations in the United States (see Appendix for a listing). The aim of the project I have undertaken is to ascertain the size and cultural vitality of the Sephardic component of these communities, and, in particular, to determine the extent to which Judeo-Spanish, the language of the Sephardim, continues to play a role within the group.

II. Language Maintenance and Language Shift

In 1966 Joshua Fishman published Language Loyalty in the United States: The Maintenance and Perpetuation of Non-English Mother Tongues by American Ethnic and Religious Groups, a comprehensive report of his nation-wide investigation of the status of non-English languages in the United States.[7] This monumental work is, as Haugen (1978:74) states, "an effort to bring to

the American consciousness some awareness of the interests and importance of the ethnic self-maintenance efforts." The work has indeed had a significant impact, and achieved considerable success in awakening and fostering the appreciation of the non-English languages of the United States as an important national resource that must be carefully protected.

Having been contracted by the U.S. Office of Education to undertake 15 years later a similar investigation, Professor Fishman, assisted by his co-workers on the Language Resources Team at Yeshiva University, is at present busily gathering data for the updated report. With the objective of co-ordinating my own research on the status of Judeo-Spanish in the United States with the work of Professor Fishman and his associates, I have focused my attention chiefly on the maintenance and shift of Judeo-Spanish as reflected in four particular domains: the periodical press; radio and television broadcasting; religious services; and ethnic community schools.

The findings reported here are based on data collected in a continuing survey, begun in July, 1981, from a sizable number of Sephardic synagogues, community organizations, and educational institutions throughout the country. To date I have spoken, (most often by telephone,) or corresponded with rabbis, community leaders, and community members representing 90% of the Sephardic synagogues listed in the directory of the American Sephardi Federation (see Appendix). With few exceptions, informants have evinced a lively interest in and support for my work, and regularly have furnished me with more information than I requested. The communities upon whose responses the following discussion is based are: Metropolitan New York and New Jersey, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, Portland (Oregon), Atlanta, Miami, Chicago, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Boston, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Montgomery, Alabama, and Savannah, Georgia.

1) The Periodical Press

The last representative of the Judeo-Spanish press in the United States, the weekly newspaper La Vara, published its final issue in February, 1948. Although other weeklies such as La America (the first Judeo-Spanish newspaper in America [1910-25]),[8] La Boz del Pueblo, El Luzero Sephardi, La Luz, El Progresso, and El Imigrante served the Sephardic community at one time or another, La Vara was, according to Angel (1974:109), the most important, and enjoyed the greatest popularity. Between 1926 and 1928 its circulation almost doubled, increasing from 9,000 to 16,500.[9]

At the present time the use of Judeo-Spanish in any community related publication is exceedingly rare.[10] The Sephardic Home News, for example, the monthly newsletter of the Sephardic Home for the Aged in Brooklyn, is to my knowledge, written exclusively in English. La Boz, the monthly bulletin of the Bikur Holim Congregation, and The Clarion, a newsletter published by the members of the Ezra Bessaroth Synagogue, both in Seattle, are written in English with a sprinkling of Judeo-Spanish words and expressions. Rabbi Ott of Temple Tifereth Israel in Los Angeles informed me that Judeo-Spanish is occasionally employed in the temple bulletin. I learned from him, in addition, that a pamphlet entitled "Services for the Aged" had been translated into Judeo-Spanish. For the most part, however, community leaders with whom I spoke reported that, as a matter of course, temple bulletins are written in English. Mr. Martin Hanopole of the Sephardic Community of Greater Boston explained that he would be glad to include notices in Judeo-Spanish in the community bulletin that he edits, but that contributions from the congregation have not been forthcoming.

2) Radio and Television Broadcasting

To date I have been unable to discover any regularly scheduled radio or

television program broadcast in Judeo-Spanish, addressed, that is, specifically and intentionally to a Judeo-Spanish speech community. Several programs of special interest, during which the language is or has been incidentally employed have, however, been brought to my attention. Ms. Marcie Stillman, producer/host of "Kol-am," a program for Jewish culture and affairs, aired by KRAB FM in Seattle, told me that once or, perhaps, twice a year, she presents a program that deals with Sephardic customs and culture. On International Woman's Day, for example, Sephardic women from the Seattle community were interviewed, and a number of them spoke during the broadcast in Judeo-Spanish. Another program, entitled "Seattle Sephardic Roots," she told me, had been scheduled for later in the year. Plans were being made to interview residents of the Kline-Galland Home for the Aged in Seattle, and it was expected that many of the older members of the community would speak in Judeo-Spanish.

In Atlanta, Georgia, where a small Sephardic community of approximately 120 families remains quite active, Yvonne de Wright, in the weekly half hour show "Latin Atlanta," which she produces and presents on WAGA TV 5, makes it a point to include the city's Spanish Jews in her reports on the local Hispanic population. At least twice a year for the past three years, shows have been devoted to a discussion of the cultural heritage of the Sephardim, or to a description of the community's current activities. Every November "Latin Atlanta" covers the Annual Sephardic Bazaar. Ms. de Wright explained to me that during the bazaar she conducts interviews, asking her questions in Castilian and receiving responses in Judeo-Spanish.

In addition to "Latin Atlanta," Ms. de Wright has also recently produced two programs which dealt in part with the Sephardim: "Hispanic," a documentary on the Hispanic communities of Atlanta, shown on WAGA; and "Vistas: the

Hispanic Heritage and the Arts" on WETV, which featured Metropolitan Opera tenor Nico Castell, himself of Sephardic origin, singing several Judeo-Spanish songs.[11]

Rabbi Ott in Los Angeles is presently entertaining the idea of using cable TV to report on the activities of the Sephardic community there. English would be the principal language of the broadcast, but some Judeo-Spanish would also be used.

3) Religious Services

The practice, which originated in Sephardic congregations in the Balkans during the 15th and 16th centuries, of using Judeo-Spanish liturgical songs[12] as part of religious services was continued by the Sephardim who immigrated in the 20th century to the New World. In a recent study Altabe (1981) reports that over two-thirds of the Sephardic congregations in the United States still use Judeo-Spanish prayers on Shabbat and/or the High Holy Days. Of the 19 rabbis who responded to his questionnaire, only 5 indicated that Judeo-Spanish prayers were not included in the liturgy. It is significant, he further notes, that most (4) of the synagogues from which he received negative responses cannot in the strict sense be regarded as Sephardic, since Jews of Spanish descent constitute at most a small minority of the total membership. Fifty percent of the congregations I have contacted report that Judeo-Spanish is not used during services, among them the Sephardic Jewish Center and Congregation of Queens, whose members are for the most part North African and Iranian Jews, and the Sephardic Community of Greater Boston, predominantly Egyptian and Yemenite.[13] In fair accord with Altabe's findings, indications are that the more heterogeneous a so-called Sephardic congregation is, the less likely it is that Judeo-Spanish prayers (liturgical poems) will be employed. And indeed, from my investigation it appears that of those Sephardic

congregations, the majority of whose members trace their origins to the Balkans or Turkey, at least 80% carry on the custom of using Judeo-Spanish songs and poems during services. The number of Judeo-Spanish chants varies from one or perhaps two used only once a year on the High Holy Days at the Sephardic Jewish Center of Forest Hills, for example, to as many as four or five used regularly on Shabbat as well as on the High Holy Days. The two chants most frequently mentioned are the Berih Shemei (Bendicho su nombre) and the Ein Kelohenu (Non komo muestro Dio). It was explained to me that although the singing of Judeo-Spanish prayers was often the highlight of the service, their role in the liturgy was in reality only marginal; they are intended principally to continue a venerable tradition.[14] Sometimes the prayers are said both in Hebrew (or Aramaic) and Judeo-Spanish; sometimes only in Judeo-Spanish. It is often the case that not all of the congregants know the Judeo-Spanish prayers by heart, and they are not included in the Da Sola Pool prayer book that a large majority of the congregations employ. Supplementary sheets are therefore provided, often pasted into the book. Congregations Bikur Holim and Ezra Bessaroth in Seattle, Temple Tifereth Israel in Los Angeles, and the Sephardic Temple in Cedarhurst furnish their members with a specially prepared pamphlet containing the prayers.[15]

I have also inquired into the use of Judeo-Spanish in sermons and oral announcements, and have found, as might be expected, that in an overwhelming majority of cases English has almost completely replaced Judeo-Spanish. Rabbi Murciano told me that 30 years ago when his congregation was located in the Bronx--it is now the Sephardic Jewish Center of Forest Hills--sermons were regularly given in Judeo-Spanish. Today, however, only a few ritualistic Judeo-Spanish words and expressions are on occasion used. Fifteen and 20 years ago, Rabbi Maimon of Sephardic Bikur Holim reports, weekly sermons

were still delivered in Judeo-Spanish; but now a sermon in Judeo-Spanish is given only once a year during the High Holy Days. According to Rabbi Gambach of the Sephardic Jewish Center of North Miami Beach, at two of the four Sephardic synagogues in Miami diskursos are in Judeo-Spanish. The Miami community is, however, a case apart, since many of the congregants are fairly recent immigrants from Spanish-speaking Cuba (Liebman 1977:299-300), and one cannot assume that practices there would follow the larger, nation-wide pattern. At Sephardic Beth Shalom Congregation in Cincinnati, on the other hand, established in 1933, the sermon, Rabbi Yerushalmi informs me, is given in English; eulogies are, however, sometimes performed in Judeo-Spanish, the language of the older members of the community.

4) Ethnic Community Schools

Fifty years ago Talmud Torah schools played a significant role in language maintenance. An observation made by Luria (1930; cited in Benardete [1953:146]), of particular relevance to our present concerns, is worth quoting in its entirety:

> The foreign-born Sephardic Jews [in New York City] still cling to the patois which they acquired in the place of their birth, although their language is picturesquely punctuated by what passes for English or by English words hispanized. Literary inclinations are on the whole satisfied by the reading of Judeo-Spanish newspapers. The American born generation or those who came to this country when quite young are drifting away from the language and customs of their fathers. An attempt is made to overcome this tendency in the Talmud Torah. There the language of the class is Judeo-Spanish, commonly called Ladino. Hebrew exercises and

> passages from the Bible are translated into Judeo-Spanish. But this method will not prevail long, and Judeo-Spanish will disappear as surely as did Spanish and Portuguese among the descendants of the first Spanish and Portuguese Jews in New York.

As far as I have been able to determine, Luria's prediction that Judeo-Spanish would not long continue to be taught in community schools has proved to be perfectly accurate. At the present time it appears that no ethnic community schools in which the language of instruction is Judeo-Spanish are in operation. At a number of universities, however, and in adult education courses in several cities across the country, classes in Judeo-Spanish have been given. In New York City Columbia University offered a course during the academic year 1978/79; courses in Judeo-Spanish are also taught at Yeshiva University and the Jewish Theological Seminary as part of the Sephardic Studies Program; and for two consecutive years, 1979-81, adult education classes have been conducted by the Sephardic House of Shearith Israel. Elsewhere in the country, at the University of Miami at Coral Gables, and at the Experimental College of the University of Washington in Seattle, Judeo-Spanish has been included in the academic curriculum. Also in Seattle at the Bikur Holim Congregation, an adult course was offered, taught by Cantor Bension Maimon; and Rabbi Ichay of Congregation Or Ve Shalom in Atlanta, Rabbi Ott of Temple Tifereth Israel in Los Angeles, and Rabbi Marans of the Sephardic Temple in Cedarhurst, Long Island have all expressed to me their desire to organize a course in Judeo-Spanish for their congregants in the near future.

The backgrounds of the teachers in charge of teaching Judeo-Spanish vary considerably, as does their approach to the subject. For example,

Professor David Bunis, a linguist who received his degree from Columbia University, in a course he taught at Columbia, made use of materials he had collected and prepared, and put special emphasis on the reading and writing of Judeo-Spanish in traditional Hebrew characters. Trained as a linguist at New York University, Ms. Daisy Crystal Braverman, who taught several of the classes at Shearith Israel, focused on the structure of the language, its salient phonological and lexical features, and discussed the influence of other languages such as Turkish on Judeo-Spanish. Although she would have liked to assist her students in acquiring or developing an ability to speak Judeo-Spanish, time limitations, Ms. Braverman explained, prevented her from so doing. At Yeshiva, with an impressive collection of Judeo-Spanish books and manuscripts housed in the Sephardic Reference Room of the Yeshiva University Library at his disposal, Rabbi Gaon directs his classes in the reading of traditional texts.

III. Concluding Remarks

In 1933 El Mesajero, a monthly bulletin published in Los Angeles and edited by Rabbi Mizrachi, printed an essay entitled "Why the Messenger should also publish articles in English" (Stern 1977:82). The author of the piece argued that it was necessary, in order to prove oneself a good citizen, to learn to read, write, and speak English (cf. also Nahirny and Fishman 1966: 333-7). His comments, it seems, were addressed to a receptive audience. Today, 50 years after the appearance of that essay, the process of linguistic assimilation is almost complete, and Judeo-Spanish, a language that survived for five centuries in alien cultural surroundings, has, as a vehicle of communication, all but disappeared.

The generational shift from Judeo-Spanish to English follows a pattern

similar to that observed for other immigrant languages in the United States (cf. Fishman 1966; 1972). First generation Sephardim were often monolingual in Judeo-Spanish, or perhaps bilingual in Judeo-Spanish and Turkish or Greek; their children are bilingual in Judeo-Spanish and English; their grandchildren monolingual in English. A survey conducted by Angel in 1972 revealed that 73.6% of a nation-wide sample of third- and fourth-generation Sephardim did not speak Judeo-Spanish (Angel 1974:124). In his study of ethnic identity in a Sephardic community in Los Angeles, Stern (1977:225) found that only elderly members of the community were fluent in Judeo-Spanish. The great majority of Harris' informants in the sociolinguistic study she conducted in New York City were 50 years and older (Harris 1979:111-12). Nemer (1981:17-23), who worked in the Indianapolis community, was unable to find a fluent speaker of Judeo-Spanish younger than 65. My own research to date concurs in broad outline with the findings given above. It appears that, by and large, the language is not being transmitted to the younger generation. In most communities, it is principally in residences for the elderly that Judeo-Spanish continues regularly to serve the practical ends of daily communication.

Singularly pertinent--with appropriate modifications--to the case of Judeo-Spanish language shift are the remarks of Lieberson and Curry (1971:130) regarding the direct relation between the degree of heterogeneity of an immigrant population in a given locale, and the rate of linguistic assimilation. As I noted earlier, the Sephardim in America found themselves in an altogether unique circumstance, one which no longer would support the long-standing and continuously reinforced association that had been established between religion and language. On the contrary, the American Jewish majority, of Eastern European provenance, were, according to Angel (1974:91-3), hard-

pressed at first to recognize the Sephardim, with their odd customs, their exotic patronyms, and their strange language, as co-religionists.[16] Lieberson and Curry's conclusions are, of course, first of all to be interpreted in terms of practical efficacity in large-scale social interactions; however, the effects of heterogeneous grouping in a smaller community that is defined on the basis of religious affiliation are fairly obvious. As in the more general instance, practical necessities will be satisfied; and, more important to our present concerns, in the process associative patterns between, for example, ethnicity or language and religion will be weakened or destroyed. That the establishment of heterogeneous congregations was in large part responsible for the rather rapid erosion of language loyalty among the Sephardim appears to be borne out by the fact that the more homogeneous communities tend to be more retentive with respect to use of the traditional language.

While it is indisputable that in Sephardic communities all across the United States language shift has reached an advanced stage, there are unmistakable signs of a revived interest in the Sephardic heritage and culture. Above all in New York City one may note a multitude of activities evidently intended to promote an awareness of Sephardic traditions and thereby to ensure their preservation. Under the direction of Rabbis Gaon, Dobrinsky, and Serels, The Sephardic Studies Program at Yeshiva University sponsors conferences, publications, and cultural events, whose themes touch on various aspects of Sephardic life. The Hofstra University Ethnic Studies Program in conjunction with the Sephardic Temple of Cedarhurst is presently sponsoring Project Sepharad II, a series of lectures on "Sephardic Judaism: History, Culture and Folklore," directed by Rabbi Arnold Marans. Adelantre! The Judezmo Society was founded in 1975 by David Bunis and Stephen Levy to promote

interest in Sephardic language and customs. The Sephardic House of Congregation Shearith Israel, established by Rabbi Marc Angel in 1978, holds festivals, forums, and classes dealing with Sephardic language, literature, and history.[17] In March of this year a group of youngsters from Sephardic House visited the Sephardic Home for the Aged in Brooklyn and staged a performance for the residents in Judeo-Spanish. In August a concert of Judeo-Spanish songs attracted a large audience at the Jewish Museum in Manhattan.[18]

What effect, if any, this renewed interest in Sephardic culture will have on language maintenance efforts remains to be seen. As Fishman (1972: 54) has noted "a vast amount of marginal ethnicity can exist side by side with the disappearance of language maintenance"; and we can certainly not expect that a continuing or a revived ethnic identification will result in or be accompanied by more energetic attempts to preserve a minority linguistic tradition. More significant, perhaps, to the future of Judeo-Spanish language maintenance in America is the explicit association that has recently been made in such cities as Atlanta and Miami between the Hispanic population and the Sephardic community.[19] Fieldwork in these communities--(especially Miami)--which provide an excellent setting in which to investigate the interaction of Hispanic and Sephardic ethos and language, would furnish us, I am sure, with many interesting perspectives on and useful insights into the status and the fate of Judeo-Spanish in America.

In any event, I have, in the course of my investigation, found no evidence of any well conceived and well organized community-wide program of language maintenance.[20] The absence of such a program is, I believe, in large measure, explained by attitudes prevalent in the community. Not infrequently the opinion was expressed that the language has already vanished, has already passed beyond the point at which hopes for its rehabilitation are

realistic. Some community members seem to have resigned themselves with little difficulty to the disappearance of the language, believing it to be an unavoidable and quite natural consequence of the process of acculturation. Others regard the loss as regrettable, but feel that they are incapable of reversing--even of influencing--the course of affairs.

And yet one could well imagine an issue of El Mesajero--or, more likely, The Messenger--appearing today with an editorial entitled "Porke El Mesajero deve de publikar i artikolos en judeo-espanyol." Language loyalists can be found, especially and importantly among community leaders. Rabbis Angel, Maimon, Marans, Murciano, Serels, Toledano, and Professor Altabe, among others, have all shown a deep concern for the fate of the language. Although in most communities language shift has reached a point at which it might be more accurate to speak of the possibility of language revival rather than of language maintenance, in several communities, such as Portland and Seattle (Romey 1981:25), Atlanta and Miami, Judeo-Spanish seems yet to enjoy, at least in relative terms, some measure of vitality. A 55 year old Atlanta woman whom I questioned about language use told me: I speak the language more than ever now; I want to keep it alive. It is, surely, not unthinkable then that a program designed to preserve or restore a precious part of Sephardic tradition will meet with a fair amount of popular support, enough, perhaps, to make a difference.

Notes

* This paper is a revised, expanded, and updated version of a preliminary report submitted to Professor Joshua A. Fishman during an NEH sponsored seminar on Language Maintenance and Language Shift at Yeshiva University in the summer of 1981. Thanks are due to Professor Fishman and his associates for their guidance, collaboration, and friendship during the execution of this project; and to John de Stefano for his assistance, secretarial and editorial, in the preparation of this text.

[1] As the result of an unfortunate confusion, the term Sephardim has come to be applied, especially in Israel and in the United States, to all Jews who are not Ashkenazic. Sepharad is the Hebrew word for Spain. In this report I have used the term in its strict sense to refer only to the descendants of Jews who lived in Spain prior to the expulsion of 1492.

[2] For a more detailed discussion see my "Report on the Status of Judeo-Spanish in Turkey," forthcoming in a special issue of the International Journal of the Sociology of Language devoted to Judeo-Spanish, edited by Tracy Harris. See also Harris 1979:6-28 for a succinct account of early Jewish settlement in the Ottoman Empire.

[3] Galante (1941:200), for example, remarks that 19th century Sephardim were so 'fanatical' that they were unable to distinguish between language and religion.

[4] It is impossible to determine precisely how many of these immigrants were in fact Judeo-Spanish speakers from the Balkans and Turkey. Immigration

figures include the Greek-speaking Jews from Janina as well as Arabic speakers from Syria (Angel 1974:88-9).

[5] The refugees were Spanish and Portuguese Jews who had fled Europe during the Inquisition and sought asylum in Brazil. When the Portuguese in 1654 recaptured northern Brazil from the Dutch, the colonists, who under Dutch rule had established the first publicly practicing Jewish communities in the Americas, were given the choice of swearing allegiance to the Portuguese crown or leaving within three months. Faced with this alternative, 600 Jews left for Holland. Enroute to its destination, one of the ships was seized, first by Spanish pirates, and then, while being escorted to a Spanish port in the West Indies, again by French pirates who towed the vessel to harbor in the French-controlled West Indies. There the French captain demanded from the exiles 2500 guilders for passage to New Amsterdam. The Jews agreed and pledged themselves to raise the sum (Postal and Koppman 1964:10-11).

[6] Large numbers of Balkan Jews learned French at the schools of the Alliance Israélite Universelle which were established throughout the Balkans and Turkey in the late 19th century.

[7] A complete three-volume mimeographed report was submitted to the Language Research Section of the U.S. Office of Education.

[8] In a paper delivered at the Shearith Israel Synagogue in New York City in April, 1981, Rabbi Marc Angel shared the perspectives he had achieved on life in the Sephardic community of New York's Lower East Side through a close reading of La America (Angel 1981:3-9). Of especial interest are the advice and guidance columns directed to the often bewildered newcomers. A statistical content analysis of these early Sephardic newspapers, similar to the analyses in which members of the Language Resources Project

are currently engaged for a variety of contemporary ethnic publications, would no doubt furnish important information regarding the forces which result in language maintenance and language shift.

[9] A total of 13 Judeo-Spanish newspapers were published in the United States between 1910 and 1948; La Vara was the last newspaper in the world to be printed in Hebrew characters (Renard 1966:99; Sephiha 1977:100-105). The Jewish Division of the New York Public Library has microfilm holdings of La America, 1910-25 (*ZAN--*P73) and La Vara, 1923-48 (*ZAN--*P72); both papers were printed in Hebrew characters. The two surviving Judeo-Spanish newspapers, La Luz de Israel, published in Tel Aviv, and Shalom, published in Istanbul (in Judeo-Spanish and Turkish) are printed in the Latin alphabet. For further details see Bunis (1975).

[10] Publications of scholarly interest exist, portions of which are written in Judeo-Spanish, notably Ke Haber?, the newsletter of Adelantre! The Judezmo Society. The Sephardic Scholar and The American Sephardi, published by the American Sephardi Federation and the Sephardic Studies Program of Yeshiva University, respectively, sometimes contain ballads and liturgical poems in Judeo-Spanish.

[11] In Washington, D.C., on WJLA, Channel 7, Susan Laine, co-producer of the half-hour, twice weekly Hispanic program "Revista," recently featured Flory Jagoda, a well-known singer of Judeo-Spanish folksongs. Ms. Jagoda sang in Judeo-Spanish, but was interviewed in English.

[12] Among a number of scholars working in the field, a distinction has usually been maintained between the vernacular used by the Sephardim in conducting their everyday affairs, Judeo-Spanish, and Ladino, the often archaic and in many respects peculiar language of prayer and scripture, meticulously translated from Hebrew. (See, for example, Sephiha 1973:49.)

While it is evident that liturgical language may more frequently reflect the latter than the former, in the interests of simplicity I have chosen to refer to the language here as elsewhere in this report as Judeo-Spanish.

[13] Of the synagogues I have contacted, those which continue to use Judeo-Spanish songs during services are marked with an asterisk in the Appendix.

[14] Apparently no comparable tradition exists among the Ashkenazim. Weinreich (1953:410) does point out, however, that Yiddish is sometimes used for prayer, the tkhines or 'feminine prayers,' for example; and that there have been several unsuccessful attempts, particularly among Hassidic Jews, to introduce Yiddish into the liturgy.

[15] In Song of the Sephardi, a film produced in 1978, Rabbi Maimon of the Bikur Holim Congregation in Seattle is heard chanting the Judeo-Spanish liturgical poems still employed in that synagogue. A cassette tape of the chants in Judeo-Spanish is available from Bikur Holim.

[16] Although the outcome was significantly different, the first encounter between Ashkenazim and Sephardim must, in certain respects, have been similar to the one reported by Nahirny and Fishman (1966:336) between Ukranian Catholic immigrants and representatives of the American Catholic majority in the U.S.

[17] Rabbis Ichay and Ott told me of their intention to initiate a program similar to that of Sephardic House in their communities. Mrs. Fanny Roberts, president of the Seattle Cultural Committee, reports that until a few years ago, dramatic productions written by and for the congregation were performed in celebration of Jewish Arbor Day. Mrs. Roberts is at present collecting folklore materials that will be kept in the archives of the University of Washington in Seattle. The University

several years ago hosted Sephardic Week under the direction of David Raphael (Romey 1981:33).

[18] On KERA FM in Dallas, "The Jewish Music Hall," a weekly two-hour broadcast, co-producers and hosts Joshua Socolof and Harvey Weiner regularly include Judeo-Spanish folk songs on their program. In New Brunswick, N.J., on WCTC AM, program director of "The Jewish American Hour," Charles Baltin, reports that approximately 5-8% of program time is devoted to Judeo-Spanish ballads and songs. Judeo-Spanish folk songs have become increasingly popular, and several commercial records are available in the U.S. Joe Elias, who performed at the Jewish Museum, teaches Sephardic folk songs; he was scheduled to perform again in late August in Brooklyn.

[19] For example, Yvonne de Wright in Atlanta, and Susan Laine in Washington, D.C. have featured topics concerning the Sephardic community on their Hispanic-oriented broadcasts. Also in Washington, D.C., Moshe Brodetsky hopes to have a Sephardic element included in the Hispanic Heritage activities that take place in that city annually. In a recent issue of the Miami Herald, an article appeared, devoted to the preparation of Sephardic foods for Rosh Hashana, which emphasized the Hispanic nature of Sephardic culinary specialities.

[20] I have found nothing, that is, to compare with the language maintenance efforts that are presently underway in Israel. For example, two Judeo-Spanish periodicals presently serve the Judeo-Spanish speaking public: La Luz de Israel (bi-weekly), and Aki Yerushalayim (quarterly); there are two daily radio broadcasts in Judeo-Spanish--the first of 5 minutes, the second 15 minutes, on Kol Israel. The Sephardic Educational Center in Jerusalem holds a 6-week course in Sephardic culture and tradition for Sephardic youngsters from all over the world. I was told by Dr. Jose Nessim, the Chairman of the Board in Los Angeles, that Judeo-Spanish is sometimes used as a language of instruction in the Spanish

Program. This past summer, the second summer that the Center has been in operation, 212 young men and women aged 13 to 24 gathered in Jerusalem to learn about their Sephardic heritage. For further details see Malinowski (1979:105-112); see also Hofman and Fisherman (1972:353-60).

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Appendix

Religious Institutions of the Sephardi Community in the U.S.

(Directory published by the American Sephardi Federation,
521 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1404, New York, New York 10017)

Adat Yeshurun Valley
Sephardic Congregation
6348 Whitsett Avenue
North Hollywood, California

Ahi Ezer Congregation
1885 Ocean Parkway
Brooklyn, New York 11223

B'nai Sephardim of Greater Miami
1990 Northeast 163rd Street
North Miami Beach, Florida

*Congregation Ahavat Achim
3225 Southwest Barbur Boulevard
Portland, Oregon 97215

Congregation Beth Torah
1061 Ocean Parkway
Brooklyn, New York 11230

Congregation B'nai Yosef
1616 Ocean Parkway
Brooklyn, New York 11223

*Congregation Etz Ahaim
230 Dennison Street
Highland Park, New Jersey 08904

Congregation Etz Ahayem
725 Augusta Street
Montgomery, Alabama 36111

*Congregation Ezra Bessaroth
5217 South Brandon Street
Seattle, Washington 98118

Congregation Light of Israel
206 Norton Street
Rochester, N. Y. 14621

*Congregation Or Ve Shalom
1681 North Druid Hills Road
Atlanta, Georgia 30319

*Congregation Portuguese Israelite
Fraternity
1819 Howard Street
Evanston, Illinois 60002

*Congregation Shaare Rahamim
100 Co-op City Boulevard
Bronx, New York 10475

Congregation Shaare Zion
2030 Ocean Parkway
Brooklyn, New York 11223

Congregation Shearith Israel
8 West 70th Street
New York, New York 10023

Congregation of Syracuse
119 Doll Parkway
Syracuse, New York 13214

Cuban Sephardic Hebrew Congregation
715 Washington Avenue
Miami Beach, Florida 33139

Em Habanim Sephardic Congregation
5511 Laurel Canyon Blvd.
North Hollywood, California 91607

*Etz Chaim Sephardic Congregation
64th and Hoover Road
Indianapolis, Indiana 46260

Iran Hebrew Congregation
3848 Kirk Street
Skokie, Illinois 60076

Israeli Jewish Communities Center
112-21 Seventy-Second Ave.
Forest Hills, New York 11375

Kahal Joseph Congregation
10505 Santa Monica Boulevard
Los Angeles, California 90025

Kol Israel Congregation
3211 Bedford Avenue
Brooklyn, New York 11210

Magen David Congregation
101 Fifth Avenue
Bradley Beach, New Jersey 07720

Magen David Congregation
2017 Sixty-Seventh Street
Brooklyn, N. Y. 11204

Magen David Sephardic Congregation
Post Office Box 41019
Bethesda, Maryland 20014

Magain David Sephardim Congregation
351 Fourth Avenue
San Francisco, California 94118

Mikvah Israel Congregation
44 North Fourth Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Mikve Israel Congregation
20 East Gordon Street
Savannah, Gerogia 31401

*Sephardic Beth Shalom Congregation
Post Office Box 37431
Cincinnati, Ohio 45222

*Sephardic Bikur Holim Congregation
6500 Fifty-Second Avenue South
Seattle, Washington 98118

Sephardic Center of Coney Island
2911 West 16th Street
Brooklyn, New York

Sephardic Center of Mapleton
2143-45 Sixty-Fifth Street
Brooklyn, New York 11204

Sephardic Community of Greater Boston
c/o Hanopole
197 Kent Street
Brookline, Mass. 02146

Sephardic Community of Greater Detroit
22825 Pontchartrain
Southfield, Michigan 48076

*Sephardic Congregation of Greater Hartford
c/o Levy
31 Lyman Road
West Hartford, Connecticut 06117

*Sephardic Congregation of Long Beach
161 Lafayette Boulevard
Long Beach, New York 11561

Sephardi Congregation of Scarsdale
41 Shepherd Drive
Scarsdale, New York

*Sephardic Hebrew Center
4911 West 59th Street
Los Angeles, California 90056

Sephardic Jewish Center and Congregation
of Queens
101-17 Sixty-Seventh Drive
Forest Hills, New York 11375

*Sephardic Jewish Center of Canarsie
9320 Flatlands Ave.
Brooklyn, New York 11236

*Sephardic Jewish Center of Forest Hills
67-67 One-Hundred Eighth Street
Forest Hills, New York 11375

*Sephardic Jewish Center of Greater Miami
645 Collins Avenue
Miami Beach, Florida 33139

*Sephardic Jewish Center of North
Miami Beach
571 North East 171st Street
North Miami Beach, Florida 33162

*Sephardic Magen David Congregation
7454 Melrose Avenue
Los Angeles, California 90046

*Sephardic Temple
Branch Blvd. and Halevy Drive
Cedarhurst, New York 11516

*Temple Torah Israel
60 Brighton Eleventh Street
Brooklyn, New York 11235

Synagogue of Deal
128 Norwood Avenue
Deal, New Jersey 07723

Yemenite Congregation Ohel Shalom
4419 Twelve Avenue
Brooklyn, New York 11219

*Sephardic Temple - Tifereth Israel
10500 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles, California 90024